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RATIONALIZATION OF THE WORK OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL

INTRODUCTION

1. At its thirty-seventh session (1990), the Governing Council reviewed its working methods as part of an ongoing exercise. In paragraph 6 of decision 90/23 of 23 June 1990, the Council requested the Administrator to examine further possibilities: (a) to reduce the number as well as the length of documents presented to the Council; (b) to biennialize or even triennialize specific items and the high-level debate of the Governing Council and to submit his proposals to the Council.

2. Since that session, these possibilities have been explored and discussed with the members of the Governing Council at an informal consultation on 2 November 1990. This report contains the proposals of the Administrator on the subjects mentioned in paragraph 6 of decision 90/23, aiming at a further rationalization of the work of the Governing Council and involving considerable savings.

I. REDUCTION OF DOCUMENTATION

3. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has over the last months put great effort into securing purposeful, concise, coherent and timely reporting to the Governing Council in 1991 and future years and, at the same time, obtaining a decisive reduction of the total volume of reports requested by the Council without reducing the level of information provided to the Council.

4. The number of documents before the Council will be reduced from 169 in 1990 to an expected 129 in 1991. This will include reports of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

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5. By avoiding duplication and by underlining the need for the utmost possible brevity, a reduction of the total number of pages of UNDP reports by more than half is foreseen in 1991.

6. The outlined reduction in the volume of documentation will make it more manageable, readable and action-oriented, and thus improve working conditions for the representatives.

II. BIENNIALIZATION

A. Specific items

7. The Governing Council will have considerably fewer subjects to deal with at the thirty-eighth session than at the thirty-seventh session. The reduction of items through the biennialization or even triennialization of specific items has already been accommodated by the Council when it adopted fewer decisions in 1990 than the year before (54 in 1990 against 68 in 1989) and limited the requests for reporting. In all, 26 subjects on the agendas for the Council meetings in 1990 will not appear on the agendas for 1991.

8. The agenda for the thirty-seventh session of the Governing Council comprised 71 items, sub-items and sub-sub-items. In the agenda now being proposed under item 6 concerning matters relating to the work of the Governing Council in 1991 (document DP/1991/L.3), the number has been reduced to 26 (11 items and 15 sub-items, no sub-sub-items). This includes an expansion of the UNFPA item with 3 sub-items, against no sub-items in 1990. The reduction of items has to some extent been made possible by clustering related subjects and to some extent by the measures mentioned in paragraph 7. In no case has a subject been omitted from the agenda if the Council has requested a report.

9. The Administrator proposes that the Governing Council continue its practice when drafting decisions to consider carefully in each case when the request for a report is made the possibilities for biennialization or even triennialization.

10. The Administrator also proposes that the Governing Council indicate in its decisions whether a report requested is for debate and possible decision-taking or for information only. The possibility of presenting oral reports to the Council may also be considered.

B. High-level debate

11. By paragraphs 1-3 of Part I of its decision 81/37 of 27 June 1981, the Governing Council decided, inter alia, "to allocate and orient a well-defined part of its deliberations to major policy issues and emerging development in the operational activities carried out under its supervision on which immediate action is necessary" and "that the agenda of the Council at each session will include, as a main item, policy reviews". In the same decision, the Council further decided "to define at each session which policy area or subject will be reviewed at the

following session" and "hold a short part of its annual sessions at a high, senior policy-maker level".

12. However, in recent years this objective has not been fully met and the policy reviews foreseen in decision 81/37 have become a general debate.

13. Following thorough discussion during informal consultations on the question of biennialization or even triennialization of the high-level debate, the proposal is made that the Governing Council, on an experimental basis, dispense with the general debate in budget years (odd years), beginning 1991. This will make a three-week session possible, which is of special value in the odd years when the High-level Committee on the Review of Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries convenes the week prior to the Governing Council. This may also facilitate the Budgetary and Finance Committee target of 30 meetings (3 weeks) for budget years and 20 meetings (2 weeks) for non-budget years (see para. 12 of annex to decision 87/50 of 19 June 1987).

14. On the revised agenda proposed, the item entitled "Annual report of the Administrator and programme level activities" will provide the opportunity for an overall review of major policy issues as well as for high-level attendance.

15. This having been stated, the objective to have a high-level segment dedicated to the major policy reviews by the Governing Council remains valid and should be encouraged. The Administrator recommends that the high-level policy reviews take place every even year. At the thirty-eighth session (1991), the Governing Council may therefore wish to define policy area or subjects which will be reviewed in 1992.

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